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SUBJECT: Afghanistan's Anti-Corruption Unit Obtains First Conviction

¶1. (SBU) The Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) of the Afghan Attorney General's Office on January 25 obtained its first conviction since its establishment in April 2009. This marks a milestone for a country internationally criticized for its lax attitude toward endemic corruption and inadequate efforts to combat it. ACU Prosecutor won the case against Mohammad Zakir, an Investigative Prosecutor from the Eastern Zone of Kabul assigned to work national security cases, who was charged with taking a \$400 bribe to drop a criminal case. Although the monetary value of the case is small, the case is significant because it marks the first one successfully processed through the new ACU from investigation, through trial, to conviction.

¶2. (SBU) The defendant was sentenced to six months in prison and a fine equal to the amount of the bribe. The Chief Judge of the three-judge panel showed leniency by imposing a sentence six months less than the full year prison term required by law in bribery cases. In this case, the judge considered the defendant's poverty and six children to be mitigating circumstances worthy of sentence reduction. The Afghan Penal Code permits a judge to reduce a sentence in the presence of mitigating circumstances.

¶3. (SBU) The ACU, established to prosecute official corruption cases, is divided into two teams of six prosecutors who are mentored by advisors from the USG, UK, and EUPOL. The ACU currently has 38 active cases.

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